

Opposition Press Release 116 of 2010 :

Government Must Act Urgently on Western Beach Sewage

The Opposition is very concerned to note the reports of what is in effect raw sewage being deposited in the area of Western Beach and the consequent contamination of this part of the Bay of Gibraltar. The Opposition shares the concerns voiced by the Environmental Safety Group in respect of this pollution which, in addition to causing an environmental hazard, can also constitute a serious health hazard to the users of the popular Western Beach area.

The Opposition further notes that in reports as far back as May, photographic evidence has been provided of large storm drainage works in the area of the new marina on La Linea's western promenade which appears to be a diversion of the sewage works which previously resulted in an outflow of sewage in an area further north.

Given the high profile reports of this diversion of sewage works in May 2010, and the fact that the ESG reportedly brought the matter directly to the attention of the relevant Government agency, the Opposition asks that the Government clarify publicly what steps it took at that time to avoid the risk of incidents such as that which appears to have occurred in the past days affecting Western Beach and bathers that use this beach.

Commenting on this very serious and unacceptable turn of events, Shadow Minister for the Environment Fabian Picardo said:

“This is an issue of massive concern. First of all it is important that we determine exactly what has given rise to the depositing of raw sewage on one of our most popular beaches. Although it appears that this is from the works done in La Linea, we must not jump to conclusions and we must ensure that, using the resources available to the Government, the whole Community is told exactly where this sewage came from. If the sewage did in fact come from the new storm drain diversion in La Linea, the Government needs to explain what it has done since the reports of this first appeared in May to prevent such an occurrence. If they have done nothing, then they have been as asleep at the wheel on this matter as they have been on so many other issues. If there is another source for this sewage, the Government needs to act immediately to ensure that that source is dealt with. If, nonetheless, the source is La Linea, urgent action must be taken to ensure that we ourselves can divert the flow from that storm drain back towards its original source. Dumping raw sewage next to a beach is in any event in flagrant breach of EU law and if the source here is the La Linea Municipality, then this may be just another example of them breaching EU law in a way that damages Gibraltar as much as they appear to be preparing to do with the proposal for an illegal toll on the exit from Gibraltar at the entry point to Spain. The matter may also, therefore, require a report to the relevant directorate of the EU Commission. This is too serious to be ignored.”

For further information and comment please contact Fabian Picardo on +35020047786